



special
collections
DOUGLAS
Library



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

OBSERVATIONS
ON AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
FREEHOLDERS OF MIDDLESEX,
ASSEMBLED AT
FREEMASONS TAVERN;
DELIVERED TO THE
CHAIRMAN, AND READ TO THAT ASSEMBLY,
DEC. 20, 1775,
WITH A
Clear Exposition of the DESIGN and PLAN, therein
proposed,
OF A
REPUBLICAN CONGRESS
FOR
NEW MODELLING THE CONSTITUTION.

CONSIDER OF IT; TAKE ADVICE; AND SHEAK YOUR
MINDS. JUD. xix. 30.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. BOWEN, Corner of Beaufort
Buildings; Strand.

AL 911. 1779. D25

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

A SMALL Pamphlet has lately been published, which, though it has run through two editions, and a third edition of it is now upon sale, yet seems not to have engaged the attention of the public so *generally* as might be expected from the matter, and the peculiar circumstances of the occasion and the time of its appearance. It has probably had a considerable sale; but, I should imagine, chiefly among the party from whence it had its origin: for as far as I can collect from frequent inquiries, I do not find that many even among the dealers in politics of *the other side*, have
paid

paid much regard to it, or even known that such a thing existed. The author and his booksellers will surely acknowledge some obligations to me, if I endeavour all I can to promote the sale of it; if I recommend it to a new class of readers, and endeavour to procure for it a fresh set of purchasers, from a party, I hope beyond comparison, more numerous than the former: if I even go still further, and earnestly intreat every Englishman, all that have a zeal for the support of our excellent Constitution, any regard for what ought to be most dear to them, their Religion, their Laws, their Liberties, their Properties (for all these are nearly concerned) to read this pamphlet, and attentively, and maturely, to consider the Plan laid down in it. The title of it is, *An Address to the Freeholders of Middlesex, assembled at Freemasons Tavern, on the 20th of December, 1779.* It is addressed to the chairman of the assembly, Mr. TOWNSEND; and, as we are informed by an advertisement, at the back of the title-page, it was delivered to him, and read in
the

the presence of the Assembled Freeholders on the same day beforementioned. It is impossible to suppose, that an Address of this kind, delivered to the Chairman, and publicly read to the Assembly ; which certainly could not be done but with the consent of the Assembly, and by the Chairman's orders ; an Address, which entered so deeply, and so minutely into the matter under consideration, and carried it so much further than the declared Cause of the meeting expressed : it is impossible, I say, to suppose, that such an Address should meet with no opposition, no objection whatever in such a Free Assembly, unless it perfectly coincided with the sentiments of the company, and received their full approbation. We are therefore warranted to conclude, that it was received as agreeable to the general opinion of those Freeholders of Middlesex, who were present on that occasion ; and that it delivers the avowed Principles and Designs of that Assembly. Indeed the Author professes “ to state his idea” of the measures, which “ the wisdom” of that Assembly is to pursue ;

sue ; and further, “ to draw the outlines of
 “ a regular Plan, in which all the Counties,
 “ which may hereafter be disposed to pur-
 “ sue a similar line of conduct, to follow
 “ their *laudable and glorious example*, may
 “ concur.”

This new political device, new at least in our politics, of County Meetings, and Corresponding Committees, has for some time very much, and very deservedly engaged the attention of the public. The occasion and design of these Meetings, as it was given out, was plausible and popular : it was to promote the correction of abuses in the expenditure of the public money, to set forward a plan of œconomy, so apparently necessary in the present state of our affairs, by striking off all useless sinecure places, pensions, &c. a design, to which, considered in itself, no one could make any reasonable objection ; which every one must heartily approve, and wish to see carried into execution. Many well-meaning persons, taken with the fair appearance of this proposal,

propofal, ran haftily into this meafure, without, perhaps, fufficiently confidering the Mode by which thefe defirable ends were to be procured : whether fuch proceedings would be ftrictly Legal, and Conftitutional ; whether they might not have milchievous confequences, and tend to dangerous innovations. The firft heat of the project feems now to be a little abated ; many who were very fond of it at firft begin to grow cool upon it ; many who promoted it feem to draw back ; and fome of the principal promoters, perhaps not quite in the fecret, have been obferved to take fome pains to difavow the imputation of bad defigns, with which they have been frequently charged. The public has certainly taken an alarm, and will not eafily be cured of thofe fears and fufpicions, which a clofer and maturer confideration of this popular fcheme has awakened. But as many are ftill zealous in fupport of the caufe, which they have fo warmly, and perhaps inconfiderately, efpoufed ; as many are ftill in fufpence in regard to the true merits of it ; and doubtful,

because imperfectly informed, of the real designs of the principal promoters of it; we cannot enough express our obligations to some of those deep politicians, who, being perfectly well informed themselves, as first movers and principal agents in the business, have been so good as to clear up this matter, and to let us so far into the secret, that we may now trace out the whole Plan of their intended proceedings. And our first obligations in this respect are due to the patriotic Freeholders of the County of Middlesex, who, with the City of London at their head, in their “concentrated wisdom,” are, without doubt, and beyond all comparison, the wisest, the most able, and most consummate politicians of this nation, so renowned throughout the world for its admirable Policy; which, as Mr. Addison observes, together with *French Faith*, makes so conspicuous a figure in Lord Rochester’s celebrated poem on the most barren of all subjects: And in particular, we are most highly obliged to their worthy Chairman, Mr. ALDERMAN TOWNSHEND, and to his excellent Coadjutor, the ADDRESSER, who
have,

have, in the most generous, candid, and open manner, laid before the whole world the whole Plan of their intended operations, every step they are to take, the most minute detail of their proposed measures; so far at least, until they shall have brought their scheme to such a degree of maturity, that it cannot fail of success in its utmost extent; to that period, when every thing will lie so plain and open before them, that there can be no necessity for explaining the great Catastrophe, which will take place of course. But this excellent Address not having, as I said, been hitherto sufficiently considered, I shall now endeavour to assist my Fellow Citizens in gaining a perfect comprehension of it; not by enlarging it, but on the contrary, by bringing it into a closer and more compact form, so that the eye may more easily take in the whole view of it at once, and by disencumbering it of unnecessary matter and words, which perhaps serve only to obscure it; a plain brevity being in politics, as well as in other sciences, often more enlightening than a profusion of eloquence.

I now, therefore, proceed to give my readers a short, but, I trust, a clear view of this important Plan, in which I shall strictly adhere to the very words of the Author. These I shall carefully mark as such by double inverted commas. Not that I would have the reader trust to my report, but by all means advise him to read carefully, and to study, the Address itself. I must here, in order to proceed with the most scrupulous exactness, take notice, that I sometimes quote the Notes, which do not strictly belong to the Address itself, and were not read in the Assembly, but were added afterwards in the printed copy, ‘with a view of illustrating the principal design.’ I sometimes make use of them with the same view, always marking the passages or words taken from the Notes with single inverted commas. And with the same view I also take the liberty of making a small alteration in the disposition and method; for I begin with the Principles or Foundation, and then proceed to erect the Superstructure.

PLAN of a REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

FOR NEW MODELLING the CONSTITUTION.

P O S T U L A T E S,

I. “ It is an acknowledged right of the
“ PEOPLE to new model the Constitution.”

II. “ When the Delegates of a State are
“ chosen according to forms, which not *Law*
“ and *Custom*, but *Necessity* or *Experience* shall
“ prescribe, and assemble for the purpose of
“ enquiring into the abuse of power; in
“ such Assembly ALONE the SOVEREIGN
“ power resides; to such ALONE the tre-
“ mendous name of MAJESTY may be pro-
“ perly attributed.”

‘ D O U B T,

‘ Whether an English House of Com-
‘ mons is in being at this instant.’

On

On these Principles, it is proposed, that
 “ the Counties should appoint Meetings.”

“ The County Meetings are to establish
 “ Standing Committees ; the number of
 “ Members in each Committee are to be in
 “ proportion to the property or population
 “ of each County.”

“ The Standing Committees are to com-
 “ municate, from time to time, by their
 “ Secretaries, and to endeavour to induce
 “ other Counties to follow their example.”

“ When a majority of the landed and com-
 “ mercial interest shall concur, the Committees
 “ of each County are to depute a propor-
 “ tionate number of their body to form a Re-
 “ monstrance to the Commons House of Par-
 “ liament, the Remonstrance to be properly
 “ authenticated as the public Act of the
 “ Combined Counties.”

“ If an AUTHORITY so respectable (the
 “ COMMAND proceeding, from the Principal
 “ to

“ to the Delegate, from the MASTER to the
 “ SERVANT) should not in this instance be
 “ *obeyed*, the persons delegated by the Com-
 “ mittees to carry the MANDATE to the
 “ House of Commons, are to report to the
 “ bodies the event of their Remonstrance.”

“ The Committees are to assemble the
 “ Counties, and make a Report of their pro-
 “ ceedings.”

“ A new Committee in each County is
 “ to be elected ; and to be intrusted with
 “ more important Powers ; namely to be
 “ appointed a COMMITTEE OF SAFETY,”
 (a name borrowed from their predecessors of
 the last century) “ for the purpose of de-
 “ liberating with other Committees upon the
 “ State of the Nation, to be authorized to
 “ exercise all such Powers as belong to the
 “ Members of the Commons House of Par-
 “ liament ; and to be invested with Power
 “ of assenting in conjunction with the King
 “ and Nobility to such regulations as may be
 “ proposed.”

These

* These Committees are to constitute the Representative of the people. “ They are to
 “ be elected in the County Meetings : ” “ every
 ‘ person is to possess a Vote; so that the equal
 ‘ and adequate Representative is to be elected
 ‘ by ALL the people of England : ’ that is,
 from the first Freeholder to the lowest Beggar.

“ A general Association of each County is
 “ to be recommended under a solemn obli-

* I have expressed in this paragraph what, as far as I can collect, seems to be the author’s meaning. Points of great importance, which ought to have been more clearly explained.

To form a Representative Body, which shall be equal, adequate, and compleat, by an election, universal, that is, in which all men (and why not all women ?) shall vote, uncorrupt, free from all undue influence, practicable, possible; is a Problem, which has puzzled all our Republican Writers to solve. Our Author has a curious idea of ‘ the expediency of a kind of subordinate Representation, by conceding to those who have ‘ no votes,’ down to the lowest mob, ‘ a power of electing ‘ a certain number, whose voices may rank with the ‘ votes of the present electors.’ He only gives us a hint of it; he does not pursue it.

“ gation

“ gation to support every constitutional measure, which the major part of the Committee shall think expedient.”

“ If such Combined Assemblies should in solemn Council declare, that the present House of Commons is *dissolved*, such Declaration would be truly Constitutional, and the requisite Power would not be wanting to give validity to the decree.”

The present House of Commons being thus “ annihilated,” and the newly created one having taken its place, it is presumed, that “ the King and House of Lords would perceive it to be *prudent* to comply with their *temperate claims and wishes*: no other expedient being necessary, than the withholding of the supplies.”

But if this presumed agreement between King and Lords and the newly created House of Commons should happen not to take place; —————

here, alas! we are left to guess at the consequence, and the methods to be pursued in this case. But to assist the reader's

thoughts in supplying this deficiency, it is sufficient to desire him to reflect a little on the formation of this PATRIOTIC CONGRESS; which is to be founded on the same principles, built exactly on the same model, and raised by the same process, with the Congress of North America: let him only trace the progress of this New Congress by the example of its Archetype. The North American Congress was formed by public Assemblies, (more regular, indeed, than our County Meetings) by Town Meetings, and County Meetings, and Corresponding Committees; by *free* election, in which *one side only* was suffered to vote. They were for some time mighty loyal, and full of professions of duty to their King; till the King did not think fit to comply with their *temperate claims and wishes*. They then renounced and abjured their King, and declared themselves INDEPENDENT.

The Author of the Address has further let us into the spirit of his design by a sort of side light, when he declares, that he subscribes ‘ with heart and hand to the sound,
‘ and

‘ and Catholic doctrine of the great, the
 ‘ good Dr. PRICE.’ This is that great, that
 good Dr. PRICE, whom the Magistrates of
 the City of London have with so much propriety
 honoured and rewarded for writing a libel, not only on our own, but on all Governments
 whatsoever, by establishing principles, as the only legitimate principles of Civil
 Government, by which no Civil Government in the world can possibly subsist. This is that
 same great, and good Dr. PRICE, who has been so kind as to let us into a secret, of
 which we had not the least suspicion before; namely, that under our present Despotic and
 ‘ Tyrannical Government (which nevertheless he, and so many others have long insulted with
 impunity) we are SLAVES: and who piously calls upon the good people of England, to
 “ emancipate themselves as soon as they can” from their present state of slavery, and “ not
 “ to repine at the greatest expence of BLOOD
 “ and treasure to recover their liberty.”

The Author likewise informs us, that so long ago as ‘ in the year 1776, he com-

‘ communicated what he has now made public
 ‘ to that excellent citizen Sir GEORGE
 ‘ SAVILE.’ It appears then, that this plan
 has been for some years upon the anvil; that
 it is no crude indigested scheme hastily taken
 up in a wild fit of republican enthusiasm by
 a frantic Patriot, whose imagination was
 struck with the great idea of County Meet-
 ings, and Corresponding *Committees of Safety*;
 it is a long-premeditated and laboured Plan,
 formed, concerted, and fabricated, with the
 assistance of a grave and serious Patriot of the
 first order. It is not the casual Effect of the
 late design of County Meetings; it is the
 real original Cause of them; and the County
 Meeting at York appears to have been the
 First-fruits of it. The great Patriot himself
 has pla’nly regulated by it his own political
 conduct. Only that ‘ excellent citizen,’ *qui*
sobrius accessit ad evertendam rempublicam,
 seems to have made lately a small mistake,
 in supposing, that the great Design is not
 merely in a fair way of succeeding, but is
 already brought to its full maturity, and that
 the wished for event has actually taken place.
 Sir GEORGE SAVILE surely anticipated the
 defi-

desirable Crisis in his speech, by which he presented the Yorkshire petition to the House of Commons; when he told them, that though his Yorkshire friends had neither *muskets* nor *staves*, when they drew up the petition, yet, added he, “if you mock them, they will ——.” A very significant apostrophe: in plain terms, they will *dragoon* and *cudgel* you into a compliance. Now it is plain, that Sir GEORGE SAVILE could not have uttered full in the face of the Speaker and the assembled Representatives of the People of Great Britain, so outrageous a Menace; so indecent, so daring, so atrocious an Insult; unless he had supposed, that the House of Commons of Great Britain was indeed already ANNIHILATED.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

BE WARNED; BE UPON YOUR GUARD!
Attend to the ADDRESS OF YOUR COUNTRY,
who speaks to you by the voice of one of
the wisest, the most amiable, and the most
virtuous of her offspring:

Remem-

Remember, O my Sons, the Laws, the Rights,
The generous plan of power delivered down
From age to age by your renowned Forefathers;
So dearly bought, the price of so much blood.
O let it never perish in your hands;
But piously transmit it to your Children !

F I N I S.

